

# W. A. LANDMAN: SEEKER, DESCRIBER AND HERMENEUTICIST IN FUNDAMENTAL PEDGOGICS\*

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Landman with his pedagogical virtuosity not only dominates the stage of fundamental pedagogics in South Africa but also is known by foreign scholars such as S. Strasser, R. Bakker, M. J. Langeveld, W. Luijpen, J. H. van den Berg and J. D. Imelman. As seeker, describer and hermeneuticist Landman (1975a: 15, 16) indicates that names such as “Theoretical Pedagogics”, “Philosophy of Education”, “Principles of Education” and “Systematic Pedagogics” easily give rise to ambiguity while the name “Fundamental Pedagogics” clearly expresses what is sought, namely, “fundamental structures, i.e., the preconditions (essences, significant grounds, sense of being) of the pedagogical”.

In my opinion, Landman is primarily an *ontologist*. Although he makes much use of the views of an ontologist such as Heidegger, his ontology of educating clearly is not Heideggerian. Even so, there is a correspondence between what Heidegger has to say about reality in general and what Landman writes about a particular reality such as educating. As an ontologist Landman emphasizes the ontological groundedness of the pedagogical as a regional ontology and he searches for the most general structures of the reality of educating.

In order to find an answer to the question: what is it that makes the reality of educating what it really essentially is (Landman *et al.*, 1975a: 9), Landman directs himself to the reality of educating, as such, to seek and disclose by reflective thinking pedagogical essences as realities of educating. Therefore, for Landman pedagogical thinking as disclosing pedagogical essences is not naïve but radical, i.e., it is a penetration to the essence of the educative reality. This implies a rational deepening and purposeful being-directed to uncovering pedagogical essences. This predominantly rational approach in his pedagogical practice, e.g., gives rise to

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Landman being able to make a pronouncement such as the following: “Each scientific truth holds as truth until its contradictory can be shown” (Imelman, no date: 165). Thus, pedagogical practice is a scientifically accountable search for pedagogical essences, i.e., for ontic characteristics of the reality of educating which, for Landman (1972: 110) is a thinking search for the ontological, i.e., for:

- (i) the universally valid contents of the ontic structures;
- (ii) the sense of these structures and their contents;
- (iii) the meaningful coherencies among these structures and contents.

In this way essence-blindness in all of its forms is overcome, the reality of educating is allowed to appear as it really essentially is and educating-as-such is ontologically grasped (Landman, 1977: 7).

Although there are a variety of ways that provide access to what is sought, Landman (1974: 7) indicates that the uncovering of universality requires a method of seeing as a way of knowing that provides access to essences. A particularly meaningful way to acquire pedagogical essence-knowledge is a thinking appeal to the reality of educating itself (Husserl, Heidegger), i.e., “a thinking search for that which makes a particular reality (e.g., educating) what it is and not something else” (Landman *et al.*, 1973: 97). As a searcher for pedagogical essences as they are, Landman (1974a: 54) gives himself the task “to strive for the original, naïve contact with the world that always is ‘already there’ in an inalienable presence”. However, this making present requires a way of thinking that illuminates, creates a way of access to and of addressing what is present (Landman *et al.*, 1974: 7). For Landman a meaningful way of access, that is such a way of thinking, is a phenomenological approach because it will be an [essence] *unveiling phenomenology* (Landman, 1977: 9) and lead to a *knowledge of essences* (Landman *et al.*, 1975b: 3). The application of this method is only meaningful if its aim is to ontologically grasp the pedagogical and therefore Landman (1979: 11) implements the contradictory, hermeneutic and dialectic methods *as steps of the phenomenological method*. In these three ways pedagogical essences are purposefully *disclosed*, *understood* as structures that the pedagogical allows to be and

shows *what [function] is served* by the pedagogical essences (Landman *et al.*, 1975a: 88, 89). The phenomenological method, as an essence-disclosing and graspable-making reflection, thus for Landman (1972: 122) is an authentic method of research because it:

- (i) compiles real essentialities and meanings, allows them to appear, lets them be;
- (ii) allows the ontic (what is present) to come into and remain in unconcealedness;
- (iii) leads to grasping a being in its real essentiality, meaning and coherencies;
- (iv) makes understanding possible by taking real essentiality and meaning into account;
- (v) by illuminative disclosure the presence that is absent (obscured) is released from concealedness.

Landman, the seeker of pedagogical truth thus can be viewed directly as “the leading phenomenological thinker in South Africa” (Imelman, no date: 43). Van der Stoep (Landman *et al.*, 1975a: foreword) has such a high regard for Landman as a seeker and says: “His approach is not only methodologically original and accountable but fundamentally honest scientifically”.

For Landman (1975a: 55) scientific description is “an honest rendering of all of the data and an unbiased listening to the speaking matter itself”. Such verbalizing essentially is phenomenological description that for Landman (1969: 25) means “the thinking, intuitive viewing of a particular phenomenon and describing its essential characteristics, disclosing what remains invariant, unchanged and always valid”. Thus, as a describer of essences, Landman tries to verbalize what is essential and real of the reality of educating. When the reality of educating is verbalized it becomes categorized. For Landman (no date: 14) categories are themselves real essences and express real essences. When Landman, the fundamental pedagogician, says or expresses or describes something he applies pedagogical categories as means of describing or interpreting, i.e., as illuminative means of thinking. Pedagogical categories as descriptive means, in other words, open ways of illuminating pedagogical essences (Landman *et al.*, 1974:3) because they throw light on the reality of educating in which pedagogical

essences “can show themselves as they essentially, really are and as their *meaning* really, essentially is” (Landman, no date: 17, 18). Such a descriptive becoming visible essentially is:

- (i) the disclosure of the reality of educating in terms of verbalizations true to its being;
- (ii) the verbalization of pedagogical essences as pedagogical categories for thinking in terms of which the reality of educating can be further reflected on, described and interpreted (Landman, no date: 13, 14);
- (iii) making pedagogical essences known as meaningful realities by which the grasping and making graspable of the educative reality become possible (Landman *et al.*, 1974: 18).

In an attempt to find an answer to the question: what is meant when it is stated that *illuminating, creating a way of access and addressing* are on the same level as explication? (Landman *et al.*, 1974: 5, 6), Landman answers as follows in a few of his pedagogical works:

- (i) *Explication is phenomenological description*

The fundamental pedagogician is a phenomenological being and this means that he can and will explicate pedagogical essences. For Landman (1975a: 88) the methodological sense of phenomenology “is that phenomenological describing is explicating real essences”. Such explication, as a critical, accountable description of the essence-structure of a particular reality (e.g., the reality of educating) for Landman (1970: 14, 15) is essence-disclosing reflection, i.e., a meaning disclosing as well as a fundamental structure uncovering reflection. The use of the word “reflection” emphasizes that descriptive explication requires thought-work because “nothing is disclosed or appears if thinking does not let it happen” (Landman, 1970: 13). Explicating as phenomenological describing thus is no abstract process but is a thought-event by which the reality of educating is reflectively penetrated in order to unveil pedagogical essences, to verbalize and to grasp them, i.e., to explicate them as they really essentially are.

- (ii) *Explication is elucidation*

In the phenomenological literature, to explicate means to explain, illuminate, to make transparent, to make present, allow something to come to speech and allow it to become unconcealed. Thus, explicating the reality of educating is to throw light on it in order to unveil its sense and being-structures so that the essential characteristics of the pedagogical can continually be adequately grasped (Landman *et al.*, 1975a: 16, 17).

A precondition for an activity such as explicating is *clarity*. The concept “clarity” means lucidity, purity, discernible and penetrable. In other words, clarity refers to essence disclosing, to the *quality* of appearance of essences, to essence verbalizing because the appropriate word contributes to the being of a being, thus to its being present (Landman *et al.*, 1974: 8). In other words, explication as elucidation is designing means for creating ways “along which real essences can move from being concealed to being unconcealed” (Landman *et al.*, 1974: 3). Such illumination as bring to light what is evident (Landman, no date: 9) however is no passive act but a clear addressing so that pedagogical essences become clear in their being-so, being-there and coherencies (Landman *et al.*, 1975b: 4).

(iii) *Explication is bringing to understanding (exposition)*

To understand something is much deeper than to merely know it. For Landman (1974: 6) to understand something means to fathom it, to see it in its ground, i.e., to see and illuminate its real essences. Such a fathoming of the reality of educating in the deepest foundation of its being is a phenomenological “seeing” (Landman *et al.*, 1975a: 62) by which pedagogical essences are described and interpreted. To bring something to understanding is thus much more than mere sensory perception because it goes to the meaning of its being. However, this meaning does not appear by itself in the being but must be unveiled by thinking (Landman *et al.*, 1975a: 63). Such unveiling by thinking occurs by the phenomenological method that makes (essences) graspable “in that categories, as means of explication, are used to overcome essence obscurity” (Landman *et al.*, 1974: 7). Explication as bringing to understanding is a *prejudgment-free search* for pedagogical essences (Landman *et al.*,

1975a: 65) with the aim of arriving at unveiling their meaning and coherencies.

(iv) *Explication is conversation*

Conversation is primarily dialogic. In a scientific conversation this does not involve talking for the sake of talking but in order to learn, to communicate, to express. Such dialogic expression, communication is not a haphazard, self-evident matter but a meaning-giving activity by which reality becomes meaningful to a person. Explication as conversation thus is a dialogue where speaking and responding (or the reverse) occur with the implication that understanding is much more than mere words and sentences. Indeed, it is a dialogic search for pedagogical essences, the speaking of pedagogical words as real expressive words that truly say something and corroborate the reality of educating (Landman *et al.*, 1973: 156, 167). Such a corroboration means thoughtfully listening to the language of the phenomenon of educating itself; in other words, it is an expressing in terms of verbalizations true to its being by which the reality of educating is allowed to bring itself to speech. Explication as conversation thus is never merely word meaning, etymological derivations, reduction or simplification but an *essence analysis* with the aim of understanding pedagogical essences with their meaning and coherencies (Landman *et al.*, 1972: 121).

Explication as conversation is also a facet of the pedagogical conversation that is realized among various *essence-aware practitioners* of the pedagogical disciplines (Landman *et al.*, 1974: 183). In this dialogue the reality of educating and the various pedagogicians form a unity of reciprocal implication and the pedagogical essences are addressed, discussed and spoken through. For Landman (1972: 129-122) this point to:

- a) *addressing* via a pedagogical (i.e., a phenomenological) perspective that results in pedagogical categories with ontological status;
- b) *discussing* via a dialogic, dialectic, contradictory and hermeneutic discussion in order to arrive at a phenomenological verification of pedagogical essences;

c) *speaking through* via a radical thinking penetration to pedagogical essences with their meaning and coherencies.

(v) *Explication is phenomenological interpretation*

An author describes how a particular aspect of reality appears to him with the aim of grasping it. The interpreter explicates a conception of reality as he discloses it in words. In order to now phenomenologically interpret this primordial [phenomenon], as verbalized via the use of language, the whole must be understood from its parts and each part from the whole (Landman *et al.*, 1973: 160). This part-whole relationship points to a structural equivalent that is generally relevant for that particular aspect of reality. This means that to interpret phenomenologically, i.e., to explicate, the interpreter must:

- a) go to the primordial [phenomenon], thus to the reality of educating itself as it is realized in educative situations in the lifeworld;
- b) genuinely understand the pedagogical essences with their meaning and coherencies. In this way general talk (chit-chat) is prevented, the reality of educating appears as it really essentially is and in the interpretive conversation the way to disclosing essences as a way to truth is proclaimed. Thus, the reality of educating must not and cannot ever be interpreted in isolated from the universal lifeworld in which it is rooted because a fundamental pedagogician isolated from the reality of educating is no longer a pedagogician and a fundamental pedagogics that is denied its rooted in the lifeworld is neither pedagogics nor fundamental (Landman *et al.*, 1975a: 94-97).

In light of the above discussion it is clear that Landman as seeker, describer and hermeneuticist fully practices fundamental pedagogics because his disclosing and describing of pedagogical essences flow from an ontological understanding of them. His search for, description and understanding of pedagogical essences and essences of these essences not only guarantee the openness of fundamental pedagogics but also insure that a terminology is constructed that is distinguishable from and is recognizable by other established media.

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## AUTHOR'S ENGLISH SUMMARY

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### W. A. LANDMAN: SEEKER, DESCRIBER AND HERMENEUTIST IN FUNDAMENTAL PEDAGOGICS

In order to reach a conclusion regarding what makes the educative reality what it really essentially is, W. A. Landman turns to the educative reality to reveal pedagogical essentials by means of reflective thought. The practice of pedagogics as scientific practice



implies a search for pedagogical essentials, therefore, for those ontic characteristics which are to be revealed, namely:

- (i) the universally valid content of the ontic structures
- (ii) the significance of these structures and contents
- (iii) the meaningful coherence between structures and contents.

Landman subscribes to the phenomenological method as a meaningful method for acquiring knowledge regarding essentials as it aims at being a revealing phenomenology and science of essentials. To grasp these essentials ontologically Landman also incorporates the contradictory, hermeneutic and dialectic methods as steps of the phenomenological method.

For Landman scientific description implies phenomenological description which in turn implies the description of characteristics of a particular phenomenon. In his description Landman thus makes use of pedagogical categories as descriptive means in order to reveal pedagogical essentials as they really are.

In order to supply an answer to the question: what is implied when it is stated that revealing, creating a means of entry and addressing are on the same footing as explanation, Landman's answer, among others, is as follows:

- (i) Explanation is phenomenological description
- (ii) Explanation is elucidation
- (iii) Explanation is exposition
- (iv) Explanation is conversation
- (v) Explanation is phenomenological interpretation